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## July 31 is National Heatstroke Awareness Day

*OTS reminds public to "Look Before You Lock"*

The summer months are the hottest time of year, and as many families look for ways to cool off, the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) wants to remind the public about the dangers of heatstroke and leaving children unattended in hot cars.

In order to educate the public and prevent tragedies, July 31 is recognized as National Heatstroke Awareness Day. Sadly, 29 children have died from heatstroke this year. In 2017, 42 children lost their lives because they were left alone in a hot car.

That is why OTS is teaming up with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to raise awareness and help reduce vehicular heatstroke deaths.

"Rolling down the windows or parking in the shade doesn't cut it," OTS Director Rhonda Craft said. "Even when it is 70 degrees outside, the inside of a car can reach triple digits within half an hour."

A child's body temperature can rise up to five times faster than an adult, which makes hot cars especially dangerous for children. Outside of crashes, vehicular heatstroke is the leading cause of death among children 14 and younger.

"No parent ever thinks they'll forget their baby or child in a car, but clearly there are still instances where a parent forgets a child sleeping in the back seat," Craft said. "In many cases, these tragedies are associated with a change in a parent or caregivers' daily routine."

OTS urges parents and caregivers to take the following actions to help ensure a case of child heatstroke doesn't happen to them:

- Never leave a child unattended in the car, even if they are asleep or don't want to leave the car.
- Make it a habit to look in the back seat every time you exit a car. Leave a reminder note on the car door or dash.
- Always lock the car and keep keys out of reach from children. Teach them that a car is not a play area.
- Place a purse, phone or wallet next to the car seat to remind yourself a child is in the car.
- Keep a stuffed animal in a car seat when it's empty. Move it to the front seat as a reminder when a child is in the car seat.
- Check with spouse, child care center staff or other caregiver when there is a change in a parents' daily routine to verify your child was dropped off.

If you see a child in a hot vehicle:

- Make sure the child is okay and responsive. If not, call 911 immediately.
- Try to find the parents. Have shopping center or businesses page the car owner over the PA system.

Vehicular heatstroke deaths are 100 percent preventable so remember to "Look Before You Lock" and act when necessary.

